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RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHNM #0899/01 3201536
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 161536Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5459
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NIAMEY 000899

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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: NIGER: NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY INSTALLED

Ref: a) Niamey 00834, b) Niamey 00830

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¶1. Summary: On November 10, the Constitutional Court validated the legislative elections held on October 20. On November 14, the President of Niger convoked a special session for the installation of the new National Assembly. While all government bodies and political parties supporting the Sixth Republic attended the ceremony, the opposition boycotted; considering it as a non-event. Several Ambassadors accredited to Niger declined an invitation from the Government of Niger(GON) to attend the installation. End summary.

Constitutional Court Validates Results

¶2. On November 10, the Constitutional Court rejected all (except one) claims for redress lodged by some political parties and independent candidates, and validated the results of the October 20 legislative elections announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission - CENI (Ref A). The court annulled results for Tassara, Tahoua special constituency. The CENI will organize a by-election in Tassara on December 27, as set by a presidential decree on November 11.

Installation Ceremony for New National Assembly members

¶3. On November 11, President Tandja signed a decree for the opening of a special session and official ceremony to install 112 members of the new National Assembly. (Note: A by-election in Tassara, as noted above, will be held to fill that slot in the National Assembly. End note.) The event gathered the GON cabinet, other state agencies, traditional chiefs, as well as political parties and civil society organizations that support President Tandja's continuation agenda. Several accredited Ambassadors did not attend the ceremony (i.e., United States, France, Nigeria, Germany, European Commission); Cuba, Libya and China did send representation as well as some international organizations.

CENI President Opens Ceremony

¶4. CENI President, Moumouni Hamidou, in his keynote address expressed satisfaction with the "serenity, calm, discipline, and transparency" of the electoral process, and opined that the voter turnout for both the August 4 referendum and the October 20 legislative election had "never been equaled since the advent of the democratic era." According to Hamidou, the people of Niger had

chosen "a Republic that is much healthier, stronger, more stable, and resolutely headed toward progress and prosperity." He called to the new National Assembly members' attention the duties conferred upon them and asked them to "lawfully represent the people and protect the nation's highest interests."

Composition of New National Assembly

15. The new National Assembly comprises of eighteen former deputies, eleven women, and over thirty cadres. At the opening of the session, new legislators selected a panel of three deputies made up of the eldest assembly representative (Sanoussi T. Jackou, chairman) and the two youngest deputies (Mohamed Sanousi Samro and Idrissa Elhadji Cheffou, secretaries) to lead the Assembly's preliminary discussions. Following that, a committee of nine deputies was selected to draft the by-laws of the new National Assembly. The committee made up of Sanoussi T. Jackou, Mohamed Ben Omar, Hamani Harouna, Issoufou A. Oubandawaki, Amadou Djibo, Abdouramane Hama, Mrs. Korone Hapsatou Djibrilla, Abdoulraouf Sidi, and Siddo Elhadji, will submit the draft by-laws to the Constitutional Court for validation within five days. After the court approves the by-laws, the National Assembly will convene to elect its speaker, other members of the executive board, as well as commissions and caucuses, before the legislature launches its work.

16. According to the Electoral code, political parties and independent candidates must submit their candidacy documents to Ministry of Interior. The latter transmits the documents to the Constitutional Court for validation. The Electoral Code further stipulates that the Constitutional Court validates and proclaims the final results. However, on November 10, it was the Minister of Interior, not the Constitutional Court, who announced the court's ruling and the list of elected candidates on public radio and

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television. Some observers criticized this as interference of the Executive in Judiciary matters.

17. The new National Assembly's legitimacy remains in question. ECOWAS suspended Niger and stated it would not recognize the parliament derived from the disputed October 20 legislatures. The African Parliamentarian Union also stated that it would not host any members of the current Nigerien National Assembly.

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